

Sermons through

Romans

Peace With God

Romans 5:1-5

Part 1

With Study Questions

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Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:1-5).

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The Point Thus Far

Paul sums up the last four chapters with this simple statement, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** It’s as if he’s made his point and is now briefly restating that point as he moves his epistle into round two. And what is that point?

In short, that all men know there is a God and suppress that knowledge in unrighteousness; that being raised as a Jew or a gentile does not make a person more or less favorable to God, all are under sin; that true righteousness is through faith in Jesus Christ; justification by faith was as necessary for David and Abraham as it was for Paul and you and me; and this great mercy is accomplished by sending His only begotten Son to die for our sins and rise again for our justification.

Peace With God

There may not be a verse that I have quoted as much and have taken as much comfort in as in Romans 5:1. The statement Paul makes about what has been accomplished is beyond remarkable—**“we have peace with God!”**

Of all the goals, of all the quests, of all the potential odysseys in which any human being might find himself, there is no journey that has a higher end than peace with God. The final

chapter of any book, the closing scene of any film, the last stanza of any song that fails in this is tragic. We may comfort ourselves with the notion that we can pursue a life of inner peace, seeking to make this world a better place.

We can say “Peace with God is of little concern to me; I desire peace in my culture—peace on earth.” But peace with each other requires peace with God. As we shall see, peace with my own life is dependent upon peace with God. The twentieth century became a sort of catastrophic global laboratory where we tested man’s utopian efforts apart from bowing the knee to our benevolent Creator—they’re still cleaning up the blood.

But when we get right down to it, mankind does have some sense of his creaturely-ness. We seem to know that we did not make ourselves and that there is, out there somewhere, someone or something to whom we must give account. The world is full of religion and there are a variety of ways people seek to find peace with their deity. It might be the pursuit of ethics, the discipline of piety, engaging in meditation or even through the channels of church and sacrament.

The Precondition to Peace

But here Paul presents that which is ever so simple as a precondition to peace with God. The justification—the acquittal of our sins and that righteousness necessary to approach a holy God—is accessed by faith. Peace with God is ours by believing that that very God who we desire to approach, to have peace with, delivered up His own Son to pay for our sins (sins which would most assuredly condemn us) and raised Him up as our living, eternal High Priest.

We look for ladders, windows, footholds, ropes on which to climb to obtain that elusive peace. But the ladder has come to us and simply bids us to believe. Certainly true faith, true belief, requires a God-given monumental shift in our entire nature. With true faith come eyes that see a different, more accurate world and an inclination toward a standard of holiness. But it is the faith, and the faith alone, in Christ alone, that justifies us before our Maker resulting in peace with God, or as Charles Hodge puts it, a God who **“is at peace with us.”**¹

¹ Charles Hodge, Commentary on Romans, p.132.

In short, verse one tells us that we have been acquitted of our sins, declared righteous, as Paul would state elsewhere, given a righteousness that is not our own (Philippians 3:9), that the righteous **“requirement of the law”** is **“fulfilled in us”** (**Romans 8:4**) that is the imputed and freely given righteousness of Christ in which we are clothed (Job 29:14; Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5). The instrument by which this righteousness comes is faith, the fruit of which is peace with God—all of which is accomplished **“through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2)

No Tenuous Peace

Peace can be so tenuous. We fight back the anxiety of what the world might look like for our children. When I was very small we had drills in school to prepare us for the threats of the cold war. During my entire childhood we were embroiled in Viet Nam. In the past twenty five years we have had escalated conflicts in the Middle East. We have no absolute assurance of continued peace—not so with our peace with God. Paul would have us rejoice in this eternal rock of peace.

If invited to international peace talks, we might walk away thinking “that went pretty well, things should go smoothly for a while.” But because of the men involved (any men or women) we would also recognize that another meeting may soon have to take place. Things change, people change, alliances form, the world is an unpredictable place.

But there was a peace talk between the Father as our Judge and the Son as our Mediator. The Son presented His own precious blood for peace (1 Peter 1:19) and the Father’s divine justice was satisfied. We have now been invited into the room. There have been times in my life where I’ve been invited into rooms full of luminaries. I recall feeling awkward and out of place. I was forced to re-gather myself and recognize that I am merely surrounded by sinful dustballs such as myself.

But awkward and out of place does not begin to describe our condition as we approach the throne of God, inside the veil, the presence of God—the presence of Christ. John was the apostle

whom Jesus loved, the one who reclined on the bosom of Christ in the Last Supper (John 13:23). Yet when confronted with the glorified Christ, we see that familiarity quickly evaporate:

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. ¹⁴ His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵ His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; ¹⁶ He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. ¹⁷ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ *I am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen (Revelation 1:12-18).

Standing in Grace

Our reasonable (and perhaps involuntary) response to the holiness of God would be to fall down **“as dead.”** But Paul writes of **“this grace in which we stand.”** Paul uses this image addressing inappropriate human judgments

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4).

None of us would do well standing under the flawed nature of human judgments, how much less hope would we have in standing before the righteous judgments of a holy God? Yet the Lord is able to make us stand. In fact **“we have access by faith”** and **“in which we stand”** are both in the perfect tense (**“we have had access”** and **“we have stood”** would be good

translations—something completed in the past which extends into the present). We are called to a strong confidence with these words.

This idea of standing carries a couple of thoughts: We stand in the presence of a God who would otherwise consume us like rice paper in a volcano, but it also carries the notion of assurance and perseverance. Hodge explains:

The state into which the believer is introduced is not a precarious one. He has not only firm ground on which to stand but he has strength divinely imparted to enable him to keep his foothold.²

We stand and, therefore, take a stand and persevere in it.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

This is no mere isolated religious experience. The person who, by grace through faith, has stood before God will ever stand. It is not Calvin adds insight:

And by the word *stand*, he means, that faith is not a changeable persuasion, only for one day; but that it is immutable, and that it sinks deep into the heart, so that it endures through life. It is then not he, who by a sudden impulse is led to believe, that has faith, and is to be reckoned among the faithful; but he who constantly, and, so to speak, with a firm and fixed foot, abides in that station appointed to him by God, so as to cleave always to Christ.³

² Charles Hodge, Commentary on Romans, p.133.

³ Calvin, J. (1998). *Romans* (electronic ed.). Calvin's Commentaries (Ro 5:2). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

How can this possibly be with the vicissitudes of human sin and weakness? It can only be accomplished with our eyes fixed outside of ourselves and ever on Christ, who is said to be both the author and finisher of faith (Hebrews 12:2). It is the iron-clad approval of God through Christ that is our hope and joy. Hodge writes:

The general believer ever falls short of his privileges, and goes limping and halting, when he should mount up as with the wings of an eagle. Assurance is not an unseemly presumption but a privilege and a duty.⁴

Rejoice In Hope of Glory

It is in this that we rejoice, which here means more than mere joy (as if that wouldn't be enough), but to boast—to express a high degree of confidence. We have been informed that in our natural state we would not glorify God as God (Romans 1:21) and that in our sin we have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) but now we are promised that very glory. In His High Priestly Prayer Jesus prayed:

And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one (John 17:22).

The glory of God is a very brief phrase which encompasses all the volumes of that which can define blessedness. Paul will later explain by a negative correspondence that all the human suffering does not go as deep as the glory goes high:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).

A glory which extends to our very bodies:

⁴ Charles Hodge, Commentary on Romans, p.134.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. *The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.*⁴³ *It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory (1 Corinthians 15:42, 43).*

It is in this hope—this sure expectation of peace with God and its attending glory that we are to view the entirety of our lives. This becomes the platform on which we stand and will never fall, even amidst the great tribulations which will inevitably find their way into our lives. We will address these things in our next meeting.

Questions for Study

1. What do you think was Paul's main point in the first four chapters of Romans (page 2)?
2. Why is peace with God so critical? Is peace with God necessary for peace with each other or peace with self (page 3)?
3. What are various ways people might seek to find peace with God (page 3)?
4. What is the precondition to peace with God (pages 3, 4)?
5. From where does our righteousness come (page 4)?
6. Is our peace with God tenuous? Why or why not (pages 4, 5)?
7. What does it mean to stand in grace? What are the implications (pages 5-7)?
8. What is the glory of God (page 7)?